

# 2015 Jail Best Practices Award Official Entry Form


**This form must be attached to all entries.** Entrants must complete all sections for the entry to be considered complete. A copy of this official entry is available electronically at <http://www.pacounties.org/ProgramsServices/Pages/CriminalJusticeSystemBestPractices.aspx>


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## Project Information

Title   Re-Entry Employment Training   Start Date   January, 2013  

Each application must be submitted with two signatures. Place appropriate signatures on two of the lines below:

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chair of the Board of County Commissioners

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chair of the County Prison Board

\_\_\_\_\_ County Chief Executive Officer

## Program Narrative

A separate program narrative document must be attached to this form that answers the following questions in the order presented. This must be typed in a Word-document, Times New Roman, 10-point type.

- **Need:** a description of the identified need and the background including what programs were in place before the current project, if any and how it led to this effort
- **Program/policies:** a description of how the project enhanced general operations programs/policies, treatment, and custody
- **Approach:** a description of the project, including any evidenced-based approaches to jail diversion, community involvement strategic formation of stakeholder groups, county-wide planning strategies, etc.
- **Evaluation:** a brief description of how the project was evaluated and any lessons learned
- **Stakeholders:** a brief description of the community, including a description of key stakeholders, organizations, and county departments that were involved in the project
- **Processes:** a description of how the activities or processes utilized in this project were altered or will be continued based on experience including plans for leveraging additional resources
- **Costs:** a description of any costs associated with the project and how it was funded; cost savings, if any and any change in community acceptance, reductions in insurance costs, or inspection improvements that resulted from the program

Scoring will be based on the elements as described above.

Please attach supporting documents, forms or other information that support the award entry. Entries must be received by close of business on February 13, 2015. Winners will be announced during the CCAP Spring Conference, March 22 - 24 2015. More information: Brinda Carroll Penyak, [bpenyak@pacounties.org](mailto:bpenyak@pacounties.org) or (717) 526-1010.





The purpose of this application is to nominate the Venango County Reentry Employment Training Pilot Program for the 2015 Jail Best Practices Award. The information below addresses the questions outlined on the Application Form.

**1. Need:** The Venango County Prison census has historically exceeded the recommended daily capacity (based on recommended capacity numbers from the National Institute of Corrections and the American Correctional Association) since at least June of 2009. Additionally, recidivism rates have been high, especially for specific inmate populations. For example 2012 recidivism rates for individuals with a Substance Abuse disorder was 87%.

As a result the Venango County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) identified Re-Entry as one of its top three priority issues. A Re-Entry Committee was established consisting of representatives from the County Prison, the County Mental Health and Developmental Services (MH/DS) system, the Substance Abuse (SA) System, Adult and Juvenile Court Supervision Services (AJCSS), Pennsylvania Probation and Parole (Pa P&P), and a representative from the Board of County Commissioners. This group has undertaken a variety of initiatives designed to reduce jail re-entry. These efforts have been diverse in scope and include, but are not limited to, administration of a standardized screening and assessment tool at the point of incarceration to identify suicide risk/presence of mental illness or co-occurring disorder; development and implementation of a pilot plan to screen, assess and when possible divert individuals with a mental illness from incarceration; development of collaborative intervention strategies to partner existing interventions (e.g., house arrest and partial hospitalization) to create jail diversion alternatives, implementation of a comprehensive training plan developed to insure all stakeholders receive appropriate training (e.g., mental illness, psychopharmacology, confidentiality and information sharing in emergency situations, suicide assessment, correctional procedures, etc....), and the development and implementation of a forensic supported housing program designed to promote the successful community re-entry for individuals with mental health and/or substance abuse disorders who have a history of prison recidivism.

More recently the Re-Entry Committee began the process of "mapping" services available in the County prison to the eight need criminogenic need areas, which include anti-social cognition; anti-social companions; anti-social personality or temperament; family and/or marital; substance abuse; employment, education/school, and leisure & recreation. The results of this effort have spun off two projects: 1) a jail based assessment and service linkage process, based on the results of the Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSIR), and 2) the Re-Entry Employment Training Pilot, which is the subject of this nomination.

**2. Program/Policies:** The Re-Entry Employment Training Program, which is described in the Approach Section immediately below, has enhanced post release work opportunities by supporting inmates currently participating in the community services work program by providing them with a technical skills training program and a certificate of hours worked. As a result, they receive tangible evidence of skills training and on the job training to aid them in their employment search upon release from the Prison. Previous to this program, the only jail based employment programs/services offered were programs designed to promote "soft skills," such as resume writing, interviewing strategies, etc....

**3. Approach:** As noted above, a service mapping effort was carried out by the Re-Entry Committee over the course of several months. At the conclusion of the effort it was evident to all committee members that the service area most missing from the Prison setting was the acquisition of "real" job skills. Clearly the Prison hosts groups that promote soft skill acquisition (e.g., resume writing) but there were no work skills training opportunities available. Making the situation more challenging, the County Prison has extremely limited space for programming. The Re-Entry Committee brainstormed a number of options and finally decided to pilot a creative, collaborative training program that partnered the training available through the Vocational Technologic Institute with the Community Service work options available to qualifying inmates. Specifically, the committee worked with representatives of the Vocational Technological Institute (VTI) to develop a Maintenance Training Curriculum, designed to teach a variety of building maintenance skills. Although the VTI related that they could carry out a number of training programs (e.g., short order cook, welding), the Committee selected Maintenance following a review of the Career Link list high priority occupation list. The pilot training program was carried out on site at the VTI, and was made available to seven inmates who were

eligible for community service work. The selection process involved identification of possible candidates by the Prison Warden and his staff. A risk assessment was completed for each inmate and all potential candidates completed applications for entry to the program. The applicants were interviewed by the Warden and the MH/DS Case Management Director and 10 were selected for the program. However, the court allowed outside clearance for only seven (7) of the applicants, and these seven formed the pilot cohort. The inmates were transported by Prison personnel to the VTI 2 times per week for a 10 week period. Additionally, these inmates were provided with an opportunity to work on site in the various County buildings under the supervision of County maintenance personnel. At the end of the VTI class (August 28, 2014) inmates were provided with a Certificate of Completion. Additionally, the County provided each inmate with an On the Job Training Certificate, which noted the number of hours "worked" by each inmate. All seven of the inmates completed the program. Of interest, one of the seven was released from Prison during the instruction period. He continued to attend the class on his own, and successfully completed the program.

A second Maintenance Skills Training program was launched in October 2014. The Warden and his staff selected the inmates using the risk assessment and application process outlined above. Eight inmates were cleared for participation. Of interest, one of the inmates that completed the first class volunteered his time to assist with the training program. The second class ended in December with 5 completing the program (2 were released during the program and one was pulled from the program by the Warden related to behavioral problems).

At a meeting held on February 5, 2014 the Committee reviewed options for a third training program. At present the Warden and his staff are soliciting inmate interest in either a Certified Nursing Assistance Program or a Food Preparation training program. A third program will be launched based upon interest and viability of post release employment (i.e., based on criminal history, is it likely that those interested in CNA training will be employable).

**4. Evaluation:** Personnel from the County Mental Health/Developmental Services system and the Pa. Probation and Parole system developed a tracking process to review the status of inmates at 3 months, 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months post release. While it is not known if these individuals have obtained employment, it is known that none of the individuals (at approximately 6 months) have returned to Prison to date. The overall lesson learned from this effort is that, through collaboration, barriers to skills training can be overcome. Additionally, participation in an employment skills training program correlates with no re-entry, at least at the 6 month period.

**5. Stakeholders:** Venango County is a class 6 mixed urban/rural county in Northwest Pa. Its population is approximately 56,000. In addition to high prison census numbers, the Department of Corrections Annual Report lists Venango County as having the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest incarceration rate (behind Philadelphia and Dauphin counties) since at least 2005. As noted above the historic partners of the Re-Entry Committee include representatives from the County Prison, the County Mental Health and Developmental Services (MH/DS) system, the Substance Abuse (SA) System, Adult and Juvenile Court Supervision Services (AJCSS), Pennsylvania Probation and Parole (Pa P&P), and a representative from the Board of County Commissioners. The Vocational Technological Institute was also a partner in the development and implementation of the Employment Skills Training Pilot Program. Very recently, representatives from Career Link have joined the Committee as well.

**6. Processes:** As noted above, the Employment Training Skills Program was replicated a second time, specifically for Maintenance Skill Development. The program will continue going forward with the Skills training focus modified to reflect inmate interests that can be partnered with on the job training opportunities available through the County or its contract providers.

**7. Costs:** The initial pilot was funded with a combination of PCCD grant funds and discretionary Human Services match funds (i.e., match funds beyond the match required for the various human services categorical funds). The initial pilot cost approximately \$4,081.00. The second program cost \$5,064.00. Clearly, should the program reduce recidivism for those who complete the program, the savings to the County Prison in terms of reducing overcrowding and costs of inmate care will be well worth the cost per inmate to participate in the program.